

Iconoclast Fury of the People.

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sermons of the Protestant preachers in the fields outside Antwerp and other cities. To these preachings men came musket and pike in hand, and worshipped behind barricades of waggons. Force, it was now apparent, would be met by force, especially as the provisional moderation of the edicts merely substituted, with much show of clement verbiage, hanging for burning. "Murderation," instead of "moderation," was the facetious comment of a grateful people. The open-air preachings drew ever larger crowds nevertheless, and the confederates protested and petitioned once more.

Philip had, as usual, evaded answering the first petition with which the duchess had sent Berghem and Montigny to Madrid, whilst forwarding secret despatches to continue the crusade against heresy. While he thus deliberated and procrastinated, the people gave him a rude lesson in decision. In August the mob rioted into the cathedral of Antwerp, and smashed the images, relics, ornaments, with which the piety of centuries had adorned the magnificent structure. Every church and monastery in the city and neighbourhood was similarly denuded of its sacred furniture. Simultaneously this ultra-Protestant fury raged all over the provinces, with few exceptions. "In the space of three or four days," says Hopper, "more than four hundred churches were destroyed in Flanders." "The work was executed so suddenly in all places," notes Le Petit, "as well in Brabant as in Flanders, Holland, Zealand, and in other provinces, as if a thunderstorm, a thunderbolt, had passed over the land in the same instant" In one week nearly every saint in the Netherlands had been toppled from its niche and smashed or hewn in pieces. Every emblem and instrument of the Christian cult—crosses, pictures, organs, chalices, censers, finery—everything common and costly alike, was reduced to a rubbish heap. No horde of vandals could have done the work of sacking more thoroughly, if we except the fact that these ultra-Protestant vandals shed no blood, maltreated no living being, and contented themselves with wreaking their fury on marble and wood and the precious metals, and thus providing spoil for the rascal element associated with them in the enterprise. This good feature of the conduct of these rough fanatics deserves remembering, in view of the bloodshed and brutality of their persecutors,